

Phalen Corridor Initiative Report: Summary of Working Group Meetings

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Executive Summary

Three working group meetings including approximately 55 area residents were held to resolve preliminary land use allocation for certain areas within the Phalen Corridor Initiative (PCI). The following tentative recommendations are being offered based on the results of these meetings:

Railroad Island site, south of the tracks: Better buffer areas between housing areas and the railroad tracks/adjacent industries

Southwest ECON: The District 5 Community Planning Committee had no objections to industrial use of the area, but recommended that PCI planners meet with residents from this area to get input regarding the area adjacent to and north of United Waste.

The Stroh's site south of Minnehaha Avenue: No recommendations offered

East of Johnson Parkway: Residential

East 7th Street from Earl Street to Johnson Parkway: Consider District 2's interest to maintain housing east of this area.

East of the Ames Wetlands: No recommendations offered

Based on responses from these meetings, it is possible to assume that planning personnel can proceed with the preliminary land use proposals for PCI. Nevertheless, every consulted group wanted to be assured that industrial development would not interfere with livability in their residential areas. Plans to meet with residents of ECON and District 4 will be scheduled for the purpose of clarifying preliminary land use proposals in these areas.

In the process of developing the Development Strategy for the Phalen Corridor Initiative, the Saint Paul Port Authority and Saint Paul Planning and Economic Development (PED) have been detailing a land-use map that outlines how specific lands along the Phalen Corridor may be redeveloped. As this process continued, it became clear that even preliminary decisions could not be reached on certain tracts of land without community input. These areas have been titled "discussion areas" which include all blue areas and some areas of other colors on the [blob map](#) of the Phalen Corridor Initiative [available

through PED]. As a result, working group meetings were proposed with community leaders and residents in Districts 2, 4 and 5. The following list shows which meetings were planned and scheduled, and those that were successfully executed:

Group: Railroad Island Implementation Task Force

Date: October 8, 1998

Status: Completed

Group: District 5 Land Use Committee

Date: October 15, 1998

Status: Completed

Group: District 2 Physical and Neighborhood Issues Committee

Date: November 12, 1998

Status: Completed

Group: ECON Weed and Seed

Date: November 18, 1998

Status: CANCELED

Group: Dayton's Bluff Discussion Group on Future Land Use

Date: November 23, 1998

Status: CANCELED

In addition District 4 (D4) conducted a door knocking campaign that served more to inform residents of the Phalen Corridor Initiative (PCI) than collect information on land use. The report detailing the results of this canvassing is to be completed on December 21, 1998. Preliminary results infer that most D4 residents in fact know nothing or very little about PCI.

Summaries of Working Group Meetings

1. Railroad Island Implementation Task Force

The Railroad Island Implementation Task Force contains members who live very close to the discussion area south of the railroad tracks and west of Payne Avenue. Although this is one small group (attendance – 10) representing a moderately large area (i.e., Railroad Island), they are able to give us a glimpse into what community members think about their neighborhood and how they want it redeveloped.

Members of this group expressed that they are not interested in more industrial or commercial development south of the tracks:

- "Do not expand industrial in the blue area of Railroad Island."
- "We don't even want good neighbor businesses [in our residential areas.]"

What they do like is the idea of turning the discussion area into a green area/wetland/watershed area between the railroad tracks and the residential area:

- "Who wants more big trucks. [I choose] housing with a wetlands buffer."
- "[I] like the buffer idea."

This implies that they are most interested in developing the housing stock that will be buffered from the railroad tracks. The group commented a great deal about housing including residences along troubled Bush Avenue:

- "Mortgage companies are not very willing to finance in these areas [Bush Avenue]. They could not get insured. They need AC because of noise and other restrictions."
- "Could scattered sites of housing be developed" Resettlement?"

Finally, regarding housing is a concern for the current state of housing throughout the entire neighborhood in contrast to the individuals that could be effected by area re-development:

- "We do not want so much low-income housing here!"
- "We still may need to find housing for these people. We cannot send these people to the street."

A somewhat related concern of this group was the presence of the Burr Street Bridge. Some group members expressed an interest to have the bridge torn down while one other was concerned that this might "ghettoize" the area.

2. District 5 Land Use Committee

This group (attendance – 15) was consulted to advise on how redevelopment should occur in the discussion area of the southwest ECON neighborhood and those south of the Achievement Plus School site. Unfortunately, no residents from the ECON area were present at the meeting. An attempt was made to hold an additional meeting with ECON Weed and Seed, but had to cancel because of scheduling difficulties. PCI planners have expressed their commitment to continue meeting with residents of the ECON area to gather additional input.

Regarding the discussion area in the ECON neighborhood, the group commented that there appears to be a large number of houses near industrial development areas (purple on the "blob map").

- "Lots of purple near housing. What kind of buffer will exist between these areas?"

And while it appears that the houses in this area are not eligible for historical recognition, one committee member that that some houses might be worth restoring:

- "But some of them are nice homes. They could be used for mixed use – condos in old big houses like on Cathedral Hill."

The group seemed to have no objection to industrial development of the southwest corner of the ECON neighborhood. Nevertheless, the group recognized the need to consult with people who live in this area:

- "What is the best approach? I am thinking that we are going purple [industrial]. When would rezoning be too soon?"
- "You need more folks from the west side of ECON to inform you on that area."

Given this opinion, the group was concerned about the removal of housing, the construction of new units in the area, and relocation of families:

- "How many houses would be effected?"
- "If some affordable housing is torn down, how will new affordable housing be put in?"
- "Can the remaining lots, as small as they are, accommodate new houses?"

The group did seem to agree with the Railroad Island group on the use of the blue area south of the tracks:

- "[It is] better as a buffer. It is too small for a park."

As for the discussion areas south of the Achievement Plus School site, the group only asked if the Wilder Recreation Area would stay. They made no comments on land use for this area. They seem to like United Waste and expressed that this business is a good neighbors in the context of redeveloping this area. In contrast, they want to get rid of the junk yard on Edgerton. They also really like what is happening at Williams Hill. In reference to the Burr Bridge, the chair of the committee said that years ago the decision was made to keep the bridge open. A current opinion would need to be re-investigated. Finally, they said that it was "ok" that the bus barn is likely to locate at the Mississippi/Cayuga site.

It does appear that we have consensus on the Railroad Island tract of land. District 5 groups provided some guidance on the ECON area and the area south of the Achievement Plus School site. However, continued consultation is planned to collect residents' ideas for redevelopment in these areas.

3. District 2 Physical and Neighborhood Issues Committee

With the two meetings above, a total of three non-committee residents were present, with no more than 15 at each meeting. This working group meeting was the greatest success.

Approximately 40 residents attended, most of whom were not associated with the committee.

They expressed concerns and observations with enthusiasm about a number of issues including the following:

- Improper location of existing businesses
- Traffic on Johnson Parkway and other roads due to these businesses
- Possible increase of property taxes due to increase in property values
- Disruptive youth in recreation areas
- Future of the bike path
- Empty lots with trash that detract from the beauty of the area
- Greenbriar and Birmingham Apartment complexes

Noteworthy quotes:

- "Jerry's – Move it! 18 wheelers are now going down very small roads at high speeds."
- "We need to find businesses that employ people. Whirlpool, Hamms, Old Milwaukee, Canon all moved out. We can't replace this with mom and pop shops and tattoo parlors."

Overall, the group discussed the current state of the area, the breadth of PCI, and how the area can be improved. Nancy Frick with PED summarized the discussion best:

"You are interested in neighborhood development, to move Jerry's, to keep housing east of Johnson, [and answer] how should we relate to traffic and development – we want to have good neighbors."

Regarding the area's development, many of these issues are those that may be addressed by the local district council: moving a basketball court, dealing with noisy groups at night, etc. The group expressed considerable interest in keeping the area east of Johnson Parkway residential. Difficulties with existing traffic on small streets and Johnson Parkway, as Ms. Frick explained during the meeting, will be resolved with the construction of the future Phalen Boulevard. Finally, the discussion area east of the Ames Wetlands was not addressed during this meeting.

Recommendations for Discussion Areas

Each of the discussion areas can be summarize as follows based on the comments received during the working group meetings:

Railroad Island site, south of the tracks: Residents seem interested in developing better buffer areas between housing areas and the railroad tracks and adjacent industries.

Southwest ECON: District 5 Community Planning Committee had no objections to industrial development in this area. Nevertheless, personnel associated with PCI are still trying to consult with residents of this area to determine ideas for land use.

The Stroh's site south of Minnehaha Avenue: The working groups did present several questions about this site but offered no recommendations for land-use.

East of Johnson Parkway: District 2 neighbors are interested in developing the quality of residential living in this area.

East 7th Street from Earl Street to Johnson Parkway: Development in this area should consider District 2 residents' interest to protecting housing east of Johnson Parkway.

East of the Ames Wetlands: No recommendations for this area were discussed in the above mentioned working group meetings.

Overall, there did not appear to be any major disagreements with preliminary development plans. Nevertheless, every consulted group wanted to be assured that industrial development would not interfere with livability in their residential areas. Meetings with residents of ECON and District 4 are scheduled to occur in January/February 1999 as the consultation process proceeds.

Postlude

This document was completed in draft form November 1998, sent to the groups consulted for additional comments on January 12, 1999, and finalized February 12, 1999. A working group meeting was held on February 11, 1999 with a group of interested residents, business owners, and community activists from District 4. Information from this meeting is not included in this report, but has been received by Saint Paul city planners involved in drafting the Development Strategy. A meeting with ECON Weed and Seed was scheduled for February 23, 1999, but canceled by the group organizer.

These preliminary meetings are being followed by a set of Big Community Meetings scheduled for March 1999, one in each directly affected districts – 2, 4, and 5.

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